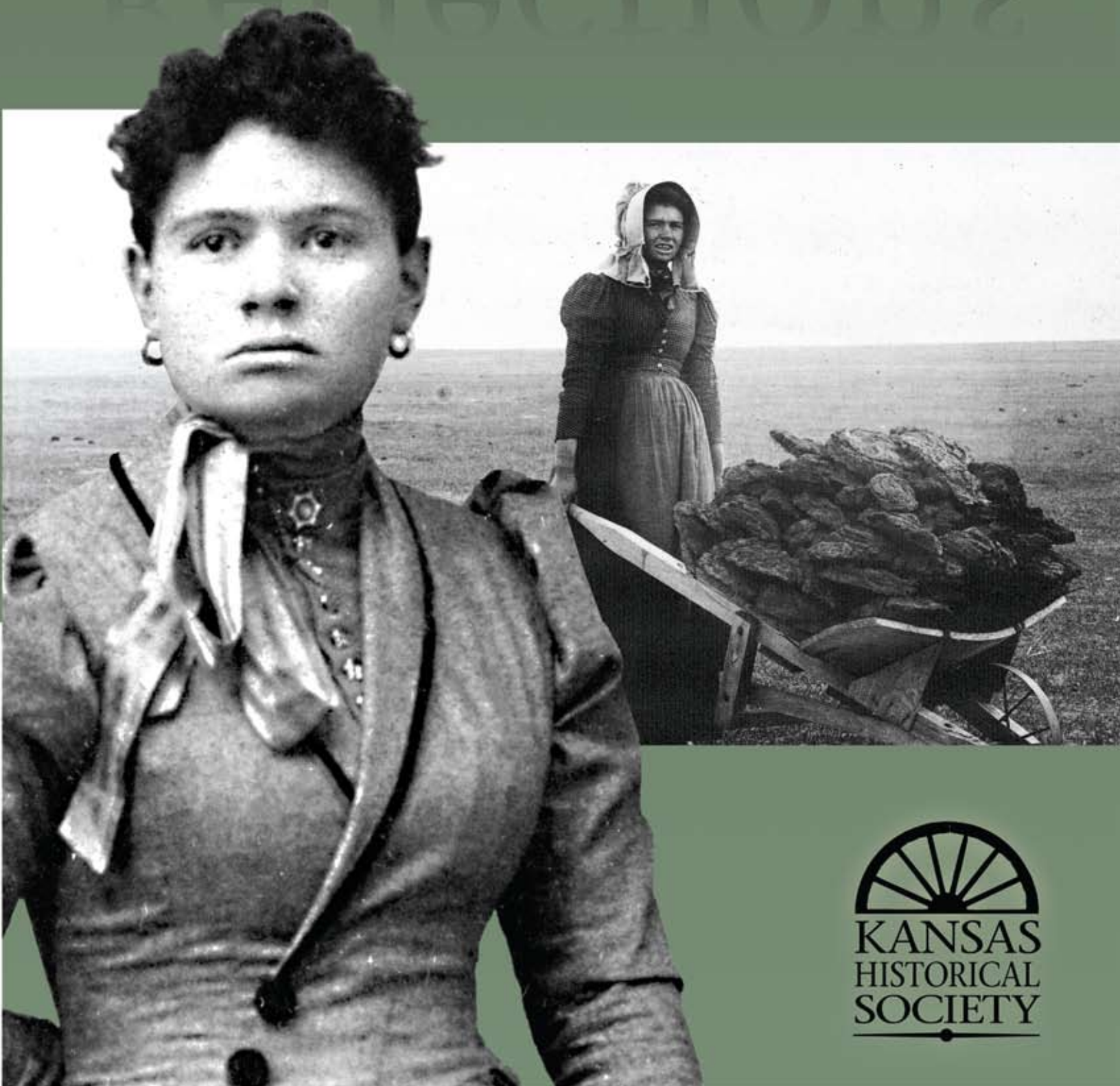


Summer 2008

# Reflections



REAL PEOPLE. REAL STORIES.

Summer 2008

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

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**On the cover:** This image of Ada McColl, known as the "cow chip lady," has been widely publicized over the years. Read her story on page 10.

# Reflections

In 2011 Kansas will celebrate its statehood sesquicentennial. "Countdown to Statehood" is a series of articles depicting key events from Kansas' territorial days and related commemoration events sponsored by the Kansas Historical Society.

## Countdown to Statehood: Defeat of the Lecompton Constitution, August 1858

The story behind the Kansas constitution is one of fraudulent elections, threats of violence, and congressional disagreements. In truth, there were four different constitutions that led to the document by which our state is governed today. Of the four constitutions, the one that had the largest impact on politics nationwide was the Lecompton Constitution, drafted in 1857 and defeated by Kansas voters in August 1858. It caused divisive national debate, catapulted Abraham Lincoln into the political limelight, and hastened the country toward the Civil War.

The Lecompton Constitution was preceded by the Topeka Constitution. Freestaters who had broken away from the official proslavery legislature drafted the document, which outlawed slavery. However, since the authors of the Topeka Constitution weren't the official governing body in Kansas Territory, the federal government didn't recognize its legitimacy.

The Lecompton Constitution permitted slavery. There were three different votes on the constitution as control of the legislature shifted between proslavery and freestate sides. By the time the final vote took place in August 1858, enough freestaters had moved into Kansas Territory that the Lecompton Constitution was rejected by a margin of 10 to 1. This eliminated the possibility that Kansas would be admitted to the Union as a slave state.

Watch this column in upcoming issues of *Reflections* to learn what happened next in the story of Kansas statehood.

Constitution Hall in Lecompton is now a state historic site operated by the Kansas Historical Society. Join us June 27-28 at Constitution Hall for Territorial Days 2008 and discover more about the territorial Kansas story. Visit [kshs.org/places/constitution](http://kshs.org/places/constitution).



# Welcome

Kansans have traditionally spent their summers combining hard work with family celebrations and outings. This issue of *Reflections* highlights some of these seasonal activities and focuses on ways in which families are passing on traditions. You'll meet photographers who have captured images on the plains and artisans who teach their craft to others. We wish you an enjoyable summer and hope that you find time to explore some of the interesting stories from Kansas' past. Please join us in Topeka and at our historic sites for special summer activities with an emphasis on our state's diverse history! You'll find a calendar of events listed on page 13 in this issue.

We're pleased to introduce you to Elizabeth Page of KSHS, Inc.

Last fall Elizabeth returned to Kansas from Texas to become the first director of operations for our non-profit organization. She directs day-to-day administration, including managing the membership program and overseeing retail operations at the Kansas Museum of History, Kansas State Capitol, and historic sites throughout the state.

"I am thrilled to be back in Kansas and I can't think of a more interesting and exciting place to work than the Historical Society," Page said. "This is a new position within the organization and my goals are to increase membership, help revitalize our retail stores, and to boost awareness of the compelling exhibits and programs that take place at our museum and sites."

This shift in philosophy for the Museum Store includes product development based on unique items in the Historical Society's collections. The store will also offer more gifts created by Kansas artisans.

A native of Topeka, Elizabeth graduated from Topeka High and received both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Kansas. Before joining the Historical Society, she worked for the Kansas Humanities Council. While in Texas she worked for the Austin Museum of Art, Granite Publications, and Hutto Chamber of Commerce.

"These stories we tell about real people in Kansas history are relevant to our lives today," Page said. "That's why I feel the mission of the Historical Society is incredibly vital to the future of our state."



**Elizabeth Page is the director of operations for KSHS, Inc.**

The Kansas Historical Society is a state agency whose vision is to enrich people's lives by connecting them to the past. The Historical Society operates 16 state historic sites in communities across Kansas, as well as the Kansas Museum of History, Kansas Capitol Tour Center, and State Archives & Library in Topeka. KSHS, Inc. is a non-profit organization that works to financially support the programs of the state agency.





# Keeping Heritage Alive

## American Indian Arts

**R**andy Miller learned the art of storytelling from his grandparents while growing up on the Seminole reservation in Oklahoma. Miller's mother helped to instill pride in his cultural heritage to share with others.

"My mother reminded me 'Don't lose your language,'" Miller recalled. "Because your language has a value, a different meaning, a deeper understanding."

At Haskell Indian Nations University, Miller studied art and learned to tell traditional stories through painting. His murals at the Kickapoo Nation School in Powhattan help to connect students with their past.

Miller's mother understood the importance of cultural connections. Many American Indian families struggled to maintain these customs during the times of forced migration, the mission school experience, and separation from tribal members. The Native American Heritage Museum State Historic Site near Highland focuses on stories of these descendants who are keeping cultural traditions alive.

Betty Nixon learned buckskin and beadwork from her grandmother. A member of the Kiowa tribe, Nixon began developing her skill as a child. She continues the family tradition making moccasins, leggings, and dresses, as did her grandmother.

"She was a great artist," Nixon recalled. "She made her own headdress and tanned her own hides."

For more than 300 years, the Collins family made drums for the Ponca tribe.



At the age of six, Henry Collins took his first drum-making lesson from his father in Oklahoma, following in the footsteps of his ancestors.

"The drum, according to Ponca tribal legend, is a person, a Holy Spirit, and it must be made and taken care of accordingly," Collins said. "When you bring one of these drums out, everybody feels the excitement that something is going to happen. When they see a drum, they are just drawn to it."

Peggy Standing Deer learned the art of beading from her grandfather when she was 19. A member of the eastern band of Cherokee, Standing Deer worked for Barnum and Bailey Circus, beading costumes for the performers. There she learned techniques that she could later apply to her work.

Standing Deer creates intricate, unique bead patterns. "Most of the people in my family wanted roses," Standing Deer said. "Whatever particular rose I did for my grandpa, my sister, or a cousin, it was just for that person and I can't reproduce it for anybody else."

*Above, Randy Miller tells stories through his oil paintings.*

*Left, Peggy Standing Deer continues the art of beadwork. Right, Henry Collins followed his family's tradition and became a drum maker.*



Creating and sharing the pieces fills Standing Deer with satisfaction. "The closer I get to finishing, the more excited my spirit gets," Standing Deer said. "When I finish it and give it to the person and they see it, it really makes me feel good."

Kevin Throssell's grandfather taught him how to make traditional wire baskets from baling wire. The basket style was designed to hold cactus buds. In the arid climate of Arizona, baling wire won't rust. For humid Kansas climates, Throssell learned to add a decorative finish to prevent rusting.

"I am trying to go beyond the utilitarian style," Throssell said. "I try to do just about every other shape to make an art form besides something you use."

Yvonne Schuckahosee Negonsott learned to dance when she was very young. Negonsott grew up among the Kickapoo of her father's heritage. She also learned traditional skills, such as beadwork, quillwork, and quilting, from her mother's side of the family – the Sac and Fox and Winnebago.

"My mother would say, 'I'm not always going to be here so you better sit down here and I'll show you how to do this,'" Negonsott said. "I didn't want to, but I did, and I'm glad I did now."

At the Native American Heritage Museum you can discover the journey of these immigrant people to Kansas. Here they learned to adapt traditional Woodlands cultures to the plains environment. Through their own voices, these descendents explain how they are passing on cultural traditions to future generations.



Kevin Throssell uses baling wire to create decorative and functional wire baskets.

## VISIT | NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MUSEUM

This museum was once a Presbyterian mission, built in 1845 to educate Iowa and Sac and Fox children. Share in the journey of the Great Lakes Indian tribes who were forced to emigrate to Kansas in the 1800s, adapting their traditional Woodlands cultures to the rolling prairie landscape. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Friday – Saturday; 1 – 5 p.m. Sunday. [kshs.org/places/nativeamerican](http://kshs.org/places/nativeamerican)



## BORROW | TRAVELING EXHIBITS

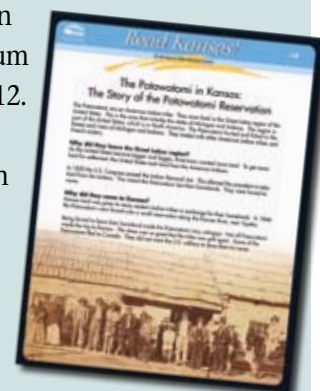
Our Kansas Interpretive Traveling Exhibit Service or KITES program offers an exhibit on American Indian traditions – *Native American Folk Arts: Living Traditions*. This exhibit, which illustrates how customs continue to unfold through time, can be booked

for classrooms, lobbies, libraries, and special events. Exhibits may be booked for four weeks, including shipping time. [kshs.org/exhibits/traveling](http://kshs.org/exhibits/traveling)



## DISCOVER | READ KANSAS!

Fourth graders will be exploring immigration to Kansas with the *Read Kansas!* card series developed by the Kansas Historical Society. The Potawatomi are one of 12 immigrant groups featured in these ground-breaking curriculum materials for grades K through 12. Each lesson includes student reading cards and teacher lesson plans and addresses Kansas history and reading standards. [kshs.org/teachers/read\\_kansas](http://kshs.org/teachers/read_kansas)



## Crump Endowment

Even though Ralph and Marjorie Crump live in Connecticut, they are passionate about Kansas history. The Crumps' interest in stories of the West led them to establish the Crump Endowment.

Marjorie's connection to Kansas history begins with her great-great-grandfather, Charles Samuel Stewart. One of the founders of El Dorado, Stewart had a daughter named Augusta. The Crumps have completed one volume in a series based on her diaries to document the family's trek westward from Kansas to Montana.

Marjorie knows that future generations will appreciate their work compiling the family stories. "My brother gave me the three-bound journals because he thought I would do more with them, and I have," she said. "Later on, when someone's trying to go back and pick up the pieces, it's nice to have a guidebook."

Since 1996 Marjorie has served on the KSHS, Inc. board of directors. She is an investment banker and assets manager with Crump Industries in Trumbull, Connecticut.

The Crump Endowment, established in 2000, is valued at \$160,000. It provides for the purchase of rare and



*Marjorie and Ralph Crump joined KSHS, Inc., in 1995.*

out-of-print library materials. The advent of online auctions has increased the Historical Society's need for readily available funds to make competitive bids. The Crump Endowment allows staff to respond quickly when they identify items of interest.

Each year the endowment provides \$6,000 to acquire manuscript collections, photographs, and other unique items. One of the items purchased by this endowment is a diary kept by corporal Eugene E. Kent, 11th Kansas Cavalry, 1860 and 1862. Written in 1862, he describes life as a soldier traveling through Indian Territory and fighting in Arkansas, including a battle at Prairie Grove. (\$2,510)

## Grinter Place State Historic Site

We need your assistance to provide new exhibits for the oldest home in Wyandotte County. Grinter Place State Historic Site received nearly \$200,000 in federal funds to complete both interior and exterior rehabilitation. The funds, administered through the Kansas Department of Transportation, do not cover reinterpretation. This cost will be \$77,000 to provide new interactive exhibits depicting the lives of Annie and Moses Grinter, daily

lives of emigrant Indians, and Indian agents.

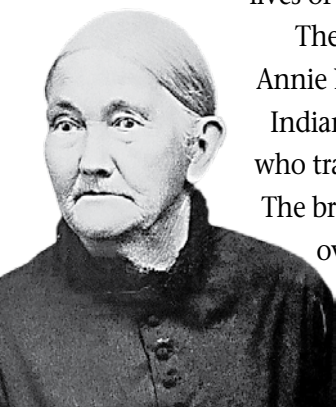
The stately Grinter Place was home to Annie Marshall Grinter, a Lenape (Delaware) Indian, and her husband Moses Grinter, who traded with the Lenape Indians.

The brick farmhouse, completed in 1857, overlooks the historic Delaware Crossing of the Oregon-California Trail on the

Kansas River. Annie had come to the territory in the 1830s. After marrying Moses, she helped farm, raise poultry and livestock, and plant an apple orchard at the site.

The Grinters operated a ferry crossing, then a trading post, which sold many types of goods to the Lenape Indians, such as clothing, powder and bullets, perfume, sugar, and scissors, in exchange for cash and furs. Through the assistance of the Junior League of Kansas City, Kansas, and the Grinter Place Friends, the state of Kansas acquired the site in 1971, which is in the National Register of Historic Places.

Kansas tax credits are available on a limited basis to individuals donating between \$1,000-\$5,000. The tax credit is 50 percent of the donation. Contact Vicky Henley at 785-272-8681, ext. 201, for more information to help reinterpret this important historic site.





# The Other Civil War Photographer

**G**lasgow *Sentinel* editor Alexander Gardner saw a Mathew Brady photo exhibit at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London and developed an avid interest in photography. The Scotland native moved to the United States in 1856 and started working for Mathew Brady, eventually managing his Washington, D.C., gallery.

Brady had the idea of documenting the Civil War with photographs, but he needed a way to communicate his idea directly to President Abraham Lincoln. Gardner's connection to intelligence agent Alan Pinkerton was the key, and permission was granted for Brady's corps of photographers to follow Union army troops into the field.

Brady's practice of labeling all work done by his employees as "Photography by Brady" caused many to think that Brady himself took all the Civil War photos for which he became famous. While he did provide the financial and logistical resources that allowed the images to be taken, Brady tended to stay in the Washington office to coordinate his staff's work as they moved from battle to battle. Gardner photographed the battles at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Petersburg, developing the images in his traveling darkroom.

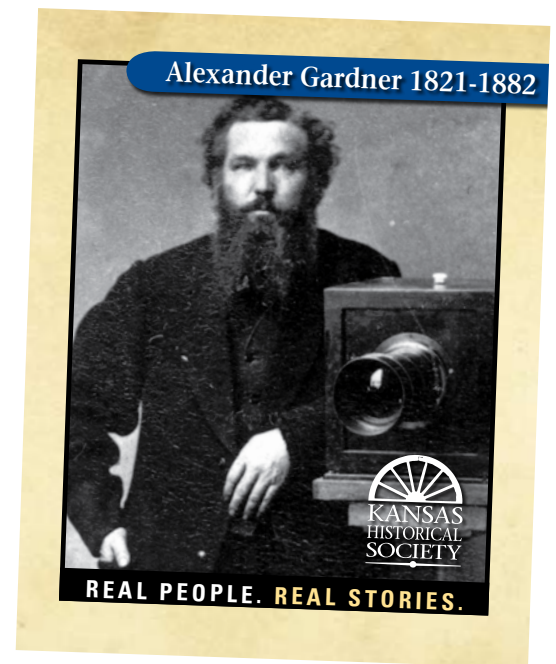
In 1863 Gardner and his brother James opened their own studio, hiring several of Brady's former employees. They

published the two-volume *Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War* in 1866, which included the work of the Gardner brothers and their staff.

Gardner was also known for his photographs of Abraham Lincoln, including the last to be taken of the president, four days before his assassination. Gardner photographed Lincoln's funeral and John Wilkes Booth's conspirators at their hanging.

After the war, Gardner was commissioned to survey and photograph the proposed route of the Union Pacific Railroad, Eastern Division. From the more established cities of Wyandotte, Lawrence, and Topeka, to the brand new towns of Ellsworth and Hays, Gardner's images depicted street scenes, buildings, and geographic features in communities across Kansas. A collection of 150 of these photos was published, called *Across the Continent on the Kansas Pacific Railroad – 1867*. The images are the earliest photographic records of our state. You can view these images at the Kansas Historical Society's State Archives & Library in Topeka or online at [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org).

Gardner left photography in the early 1870s and became the head of the Masonic Mutual Relief Association for the District of Columbia. He died in 1882.



Gardner took this photo of the U.S. Express Overland stage starting for Denver from Hays, guarded by Buffalo Soldiers from Fort Hays.



# Celebrating Culture: The Fiesta Tradition



Behind the bright carnival lights, the sounds of the mariachi band, and the aroma of cumin and chili powder wafting through the air, there lies a story of a culture passing on its traditions from one generation to the next.

The word “fiesta” means a happy, joyful celebration. In many Kansas communities it means one or several days of music, dancing, parades, food, games, races, and crafts. While they are fundraising events for churches and schools, they are also an opportunity for the Hispanic community to celebrate its rich traditions and share them with others.

One of the state’s oldest fiestas originated in Garden City in 1926, where a large population of Hispanic farm laborers had settled. The fiesta was a celebration of Mexico’s independence and marked the winding down of harvest. There were actually two fiestas at first, each taking place in different back yards. Over the years, the celebrations grew together and included baseball games, coronation of the fiesta queen, parades, folkloric dancing, Catholic Mass, and patriotic speeches.



Other communities across the state have developed their own fiestas. The organizers of Fiesta Mexicana in Topeka believe that their event is the largest in the Midwest, celebrating its 75th anniversary in July 2008. The Topeka fiesta began much like the one in Garden City, but it was the opportunity to work for the railroad that brought families to Topeka. Many settled near the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway shops, an area called “Little Mexico.” Our Lady of Guadalupe Church ministers to those living in the area, and still relies upon the fiesta for funding. The first Topeka fiestas were small, attended only by parishioners and extended family. Food was cooked in homes and sold on the church grounds. Local artists performed music and dances from the Mexican homeland.

Today, Fiesta Mexicana spans several blocks. Visitors come from across the country to see nationally known performers. Volunteers work for months in advance to prepare more than 50,000 food items for sale. Other highlights include a carnival, golf tournament, parade, jalapeño eating contest, and the coronation ball. Young men and women from the church community compete by selling Mexican food items and holding other fundraisers

*Above, like the tradition of the fiesta, mariachi music is passed from generation to generation. Here Mariachi Estrella is shown in a 1986 performance at the Fiesta Mexicana in Topeka. Left, a float from the 1928 Garden City fiesta parade. (Courtesy Finney County Historical Society)*





*A boy scout raises the Mexican flag as part of Garden City's 1975 Mexican fiesta. That city's fiesta is one of the oldest in the state.*

prior to the fiesta. The ones who raise the most money are crowned king and queen of the fiesta ball.

The 2002 Fiesta Mexicana queen, Kristina Muñoz, is the second-year chair of the fiesta committee. In addition to serving on the committee for the past three years, she has helped in the kitchen. "My parents, especially my mom, stressed the importance of volunteering and helping with the parish fiesta for many years," Muñoz said, adding that her siblings also volunteer.

Muñoz values the role the fiesta plays in keeping her cultural heritage alive in the community. "We open up our culture and traditions for everyone to come see and experience with us," Muñoz said. "Most people are familiar with Mexican food, but there are many other aspects to our culture, heritage, and traditions that may not be as well known."

Muñoz is one of the youngest to ever hold the demanding position of fiesta chair. She knows that it is up to people like herself and her peers to continue the tradition. "Our great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents all volunteered and were part of the fiesta. Now we join them as fiesta volunteers. It has become tradition for families and parishioners in general to come and help in any way they can. Many young people have grown up helping, and continue to do so."

Just as ethnic groups count on their young people to continue folk traditions, the Kansas Historical Society counts on Kansans to share their photographs, documents, and objects to help preserve the state's rich cultural heritage. You can see a fiesta dress and other folk collection artifacts at the Kansas Museum of History or see fiesta photos online at [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org).

## BROWSE | KANSAS MEMORY

*Kansas Memory* is the largest digital collection of images and documents pertaining to Kansas history. You can browse categories to find images representing a specific cultural background. In our collection of Hispanic Kansan photos you'll find this image of Dodge City's 1952 Boot Hill Fiesta parade. Visible are a band conductor, drum majorette, baton twirlers, marching band, spectators, buildings, businesses, and automobiles.

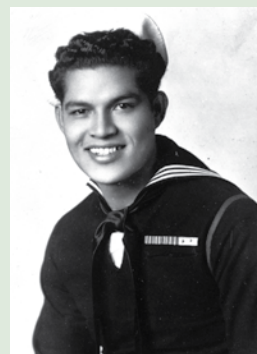
[kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org)



## SHARE | STATE ARCHIVES & LIBRARY

Sue Rodriguez donated some of her family's photo collection to the Kansas Historical Society's State Archives & Library, including this 1950 image of Frank Rodriguez, labeled "the first Hispanic male graduate of Garden City High School."

We are interested in collecting other photos and documents from the Hispanic communities in Kansas. If you have some of these items to share, please contact acquisitions curator Nancy Sherbert at 785-272-8681, ext. 303. [kshs.org/places/state\\_archives](http://kshs.org/places/state_archives)



## VISIT | KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Dresses like this are worn by young women who keep their Mexican heritage alive by dancing at fiestas and other celebrations. You can see this dress and other objects representing folk traditions at the Kansas Museum of History.

9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tuesday – Saturday,

1 – 5 p.m. Sunday.

[kshs.org/places/museum](http://kshs.org/places/museum)



## Margaret “Redfern” Pitzer

Folk arts are those passed down through generations. Czech eggs, Chinese origami, African masks, and other folk arts reflect the traditional social values of the people who create them. Their work and their stories are a legacy for the generations that come after them.

Margaret “Redfern” Pitzer was born in 1932 in Cherokee County, Oklahoma, but moved to Kansas with her family when she was young. To avoid discrimination, her family played down their Indian roots. As an adult, Pitzer renewed an interest in her Cherokee roots and took up basket making, an art her great-grandmother had taught her.

Pitzer recalls her great-grandmother “would sit down and take little pieces of grass and show me how to make baskets. I thought (she) was the greatest thing in the world ... I just loved sitting there and talking to her and watching her.”

Pitzer went on to become one of the most respected American Indian artists in Kansas. Her basketry and



*Margaret “Redfern” Pitzer rediscovered her Cherokee heritage by practicing the basket making skills passed on to her by her great-grandmother.*

beadwork are sought after by collectors and have been featured in museums across the United States. In 1991 she received the Kansas Governor’s Arts Award for her basketry.

Margaret “Redfern” Pitzer passed away several years ago, but her story lives on in her baskets and in those to whom she passed her skills.

## What’s in YOUR shed?

The papers and mementos we accumulate during our lives tell stories about us and our families, but what do we do with records for a club or fraternal organization? Rosters, minutes, and pamphlets have stories to tell, and chances are there’s someone out there with questions these types of records can answer.

Johnnie Zibert, president of the Arma chapter of Slovenska Narodna Podpoma Jednota, or Slovenian National Benefit Society (SNPJ), kept his organization’s records in his shed. The SNPJ sponsored social and fraternal events to help Slovenian Americans preserve their culture and meet new people. Coal mining brought many Slovenian immigrants to southeast Kansas in the early 20th century. At one time there were 15 SNPJ lodges in the area, but only two remain today. As lodges closed, their records were given to remaining lodges for safekeeping.

Zibert and other members of the Arma SNPJ presented the records to the Kansas Historical Society on March 31, 2008. The collection included a photo, certificates, ledgers, and other documents that will help researchers learn more

*Phyllis Bitner, Johnnie Zibert, and Kansas Historical Society Executive Director Jennie Chinn. Bitner encouraged Zibert to donate the items he’d been storing in his shed to the Kansas Historical Society.*



about the Slovenian American families in southeast Kansas from as far back as the early 1900s.

The Historical Society staff was thrilled to learn of the collection. “Previously, we had limited information and primary resources on the Slovenian communities in Kansas,” said Nancy Sherbert, curator of photographs and special collections acquisitions. “Researchers will find the membership lists and Society minutes useful for finding family members and studying Slovenian culture.”

Sherbert urges others to consider donating their own records. “Collections do not have to be organized, old, or related to a famous individual, event, or organization in order for them to be historically significant,” Sherbert said. “We are looking for materials in either paper or electronic form that chronicle the lives of typical Kansans.”

## Crystal L. Walker

The history of her childhood home in Osawatomie inspired Crystal Walker to want to share stories. She now tells about those fascinating people from Bleeding Kansas and early 20th century to her students at Shawnee Heights Middle School in Topeka. Walker, a Historical Society, Inc., member since 2006, said the narrative about the famous oilman who built the house on First Street in 1902 piqued her lifelong interest in the state's history, inspiring her to study and teach.



*Crystal Walker serves on the KSHS, Inc. board of directors.*

Growing up in Osawatomie, Walker remembers her parents recounting the story of Pennsylvania oilman William Mills to passersby interested in their family home. Mills is credited with drilling the Norman #1 well in Neodesha, which became the first successful commercial oil well west of the Mississippi.

The home was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 after her family had taken on a restoration project. Her father, Doug Walker, a former Kansas state senator, historian, and carpenter, asked Walker and her two sisters to work on the house during their summers.

"We would always find new things in the house and my parents would give tours as people passed through town," Walker said. "We've been fixing it up since 1983, and every year it's supposed to be done in two years."

Prompted by longtime Historical Society members Robert and Nel Lindner Richmond to get involved, Walker now serves on the KSHS, Inc., Board of Directors as her father once did. She is quite interested in using primary sources to teach history and finds the Historical Society's publications to be a great asset.

"A lot of the articles I can use in the classroom," Walker said. "Many of the articles pertain to topics we study."

Her favorite topic to teach on Kansas history is John Brown and Bleeding Kansas, and her students agree. "They like anything strange or out of the ordinary," she said.

Now in her fourth year of teaching, Walker is completing coursework at Pittsburg State University for a master's degree.

## BECOME A MEMBER

Membership support enables the Historical Society's programs to continue. The cost of membership remains only \$40 annually, members receive free entrance to the Museum and all State Historic Sites, a discount at KSHS Stores and on online purchases, as well as quarterly issues of *Reflections* and the award-winning *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*.



# Pioneer Photographer: *The Story of the Cow Chip Lady*

Ada McColl didn't plan to be one of the most well-known pioneer women models. She just wanted to be a photographer.

At the age of 21, when most young women were considering more traditional roles, Ada wanted to learn how to operate a camera. Her younger sister, Lora, was interested in becoming a teacher.

The McColl family had moved to Medicine Lodge in 1876 from Iowa. By 1884 the family became unhappy with their prairie farm and decided to move to Florida. After a short time, William and Polly McColl moved their family back to Kansas and homesteaded near Lakin City in Kearny County. Here, Ada helped her father with the chores of raising cattle and farming.

In answer to their daughters' career choices, the McColls sent Lora to school and Ada to a photographer in Garden City, where she served as an apprentice.

H. L. Wolf, who operated a photography company in Garden City, served as Ada's mentor. Wolf also recommended the camera – an 1890 model made by the Rochester Optical Company, which Ada received from her parents in 1892. Wolf advised Ada that she should be able to purchase a good camera “for not less than \$15 to do good work.”

“I think the reason she got interested in photography was because they did not see their relatives in Iowa sometimes for years,” recalled Ada's daughter, Erma Pryor, in a letter to the Historical Society. “They would have pictures taken and send them.”

Pryor inherited Ada's camera and gained an appreciation for the technology. “It sat on a tripod and had to be level,” Pryor said. “She had to put the plates into the camera where no light could touch them. You just didn't touch a button and there was your picture. You had to hold a pose for 6 to 8 minutes so that is why no one ever smiled in a picture.”

In 1893, when it came time to create the famous photograph, Ada's mother Polly operated the camera so that Ada could pose. Three-year-old Burt sat nearby on the wooden camera box. In later years he would often be mistaken for a girl. A lesser-known image, with Polly as the subject, was created at the same time.

“I asked my mother why she had her mouth open in that picture of her and the wheelbarrow full of cow chips,” Pryor recalled, “and she said she was telling her mother how to take the picture.”

With her camera, Ada created family portraits and documented the Kansas prairie. Her images depict life on



Left, Ada McColl at the H. L. Wolf studios, 1894.

nearby Kearny County farms. In her account book, Ada kept careful records of photography expenses and numbered or named all of her photographs. Since Wolf processed the photographs, he may have received credit for some of Ada's work.

During 1893, Ada took a trip to visit relatives in Iowa. There she met her future husband, Henry J. Thiles. The couple was married in Iowa in 1895, where they raised their family.

In a letter dated March 30, 1895, Wolf told Ada that he would continue to store her photograph collection. "I have your negatives and they are not in my way. Should you want them any time will send them to you," Wolf wrote. Apparently, Ada never claimed this collection.

"I distinctly heard Mr. Wolf tell my mother that when he sold out in Garden City and moved he had left her plates in the studio," Pryor said, "and the man that bought him out got them."

In the 1890s numerous copies of the cow chip image were printed and H. L. Wolf was identified as the photographer. As the mystery grew, attempts were made to identify those involved.

In 1980 the Finney County Historical Society published the image in its newsletter, *The Sequoyan*, and asked for help in identifying the subjects. Finally in 1984, Ada's granddaughter, Rochelle Danner, contacted the Kansas Historical Society and provided the missing details.

*The Finney County Historical Society in 1980 asked the public to help identify the photograph. The Historical Society in 1986 identified Ada McColl as the woman in the picture.*



## BROWSE | KANSAS MEMORY

You'll find photographs of Ada and Burt McColl in *Kansas Memory*, our online resource. Here you can browse other images of Kearny and Barber counties, Kansas pioneers, and 19th century photographers. *Kansas Memory* is the largest digital collection of images and documents on Kansas history. [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org)



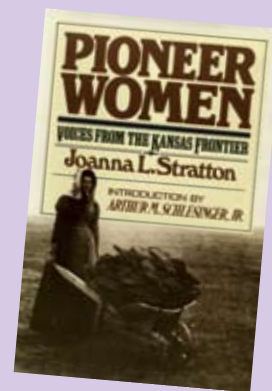
## EXPLORE | STATE ARCHIVES & LIBRARY

The State Archives & Library in Topeka can help track families, such as the McColls, through the Kansas State Census, 1855-1925, and numerous newspapers, like the *Lakin Eagle* and *Kearny County Advocate*. Many of our microfilms are also available through interlibrary loan. [kshs.org/places/state\\_archives](http://kshs.org/places/state_archives)



## VISIT | MUSEUM STORE

Ada McColl is pictured on the cover of the popular book *Pioneer Women: Voices From the Kansas Frontier*, available through the Museum Store. This book by Joanna L. Stratton highlights the Lilla Day Monroe stories from the Historical Society's collection. Shop in person or online. [kshs.org/store](http://kshs.org/store)



# Happening at KSHS

## Wah-Shun-Gah Days at Kaw Mission State Historic Site

Join us June 21-22 for the Kaw Inter-Tribal Pow Wow, the centerpiece of Wa-Shun-Gah Days. Other programs include the Flowers of the Prairie Quilt Show, Hiebert's Dulcimers, TerryLee Whetstone Native American Flute, and the six-mile Wah-Shun-Gah Walk. [kshs.org/places/kaw](http://kshs.org/places/kaw)



## Independence Day Celebration at Fort Hays State Historic Site



The 20th annual Independence Day Picnic and Band Concert will be held Friday, July 4. This free event includes a hot dog picnic, family entertainment, and a concert by the Hays City Summer Band. [kshs.org/places/forthays](http://kshs.org/places/forthays)

## Territorial Days 2008 at Constitution Hall State Historic Site

Celebrate Lecompton's territorial and national history June 27-28 at this annual community-wide festival. Featuring crafts, carnival, reenactments, pioneer skills, demonstrations; tours of Constitution Hall State Historic Site, the Territorial Capitol-Lane Museum, and Democratic Headquarters; and a performance by the Lecompton Reenactors. [kshs.org/places/constitution](http://kshs.org/places/constitution)



## Sundown Film Festival at the Kansas Historical Society

The third annual Sundown Film Festival presents a unique opportunity for families to tour the Kansas Museum of History and gather under the stars at sundown as we show a film outdoors ... all at no charge! In keeping with our Special Gallery exhibit, *Forces of Nature*, this year's films have a weather theme. They are *The Wizard of Oz* (July 18), *Airport* (July 25), *Paper Moon* (August 1), and *Twister* (August 8).



## JOIN US

Join KSHS, Inc., the non-profit foundation that supports the programs of the Kansas Historical Society. Memberships start at just \$40, and you'll receive these benefits:

- Free admission to the Kansas Museum of History and our 16 state historic sites
- Subscription to our scholarly journal, *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains*, and our news magazine, *Reflections*
- Museum Store discounts and reduced rates on KSHS services (including photo orders)
- Special invitations to meetings, exhibit openings, and other KSHS events

Joining is easy ... visit [kshs.org/joinkshs](http://kshs.org/joinkshs) or call 785-272-8681, ext. 209, today!



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Online at [kshs.org/calendar](http://kshs.org/calendar)

**May 31 – June 15, 2008**

***2008 Kansas Archeology Training Program***

Pawnee Indian Museum State Historic Site, Republic

**June 6 – 7, 2008**

***KSHS, Inc., 31st Annual Summer Meeting***

Garden City and Dodge City

**June 13, 2008**

***Kaw Mission Councils Concert***

Kaw Mission State Historic Site, Council Grove

**June 20 – 22, 2008**

***Young Troopers Camp***

Fort Hays State Historic Site, Hays

**June 21 – 22, 2008**

***Wah-Shun-Gah Days***

Kaw Mission State Historic Site, Council Grove

**June 27 – June 28, 2008**

***Territorial Days 2008***

Constitution Hall State Historic Site, Lecompton

**July 4, 2008**

***Independence Day Celebration***

Fort Hays State Historic Site, Hays

**Fridays July 18 – August 8, 2008**

***Sundown Film Festival***

Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

*The Wizard of Oz* (July 18)

*Airport* (July 25)

*Paper Moon* (August 1)

*Twister* (August 8)

**August 16, 2008**

***Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review***

***Quarterly Meeting***

Kansas Historical Society, Topeka

**August 17, 2008**

***Band Concert and Ice Cream Social***

Kaw Mission State Historic Site, Council Grove

## Summer 2008

### VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2

Kathleen Sebelius

Governor of Kansas

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Editor, Bobbie Athon

Assistant Editor, Teresa Jenkins

Designer, Linda Kunkle Park

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*Reflections* is published quarterly by the Kansas State

Historical Society, Inc., 6425 SW 6th Avenue,

Topeka KS 66615-1099. It is distributed to members

of the KSHS, Inc. and at many KSHS sites.

Membership information is available by calling

Elizabeth Page, KSHS, Inc., 785-272-8681, ext. 209;

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***Paid for with private funds by the  
Kansas State Historical Society, Inc.***





*Kansas Memory – In the good ol' summertime!*

If you're bothered by the heat this summer, log on to [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org) and browse our water environment images. This informal portrait of a group of women and girls wading in a creek or river in Sedgwick County is dated between 1900 and 1920. Get your feet wet ... visit [kansasmemory.org](http://kansasmemory.org) today!

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